

## DETERMINANTS OF DEPRESSION ANXIETY STRESS AMONG LEFT BEHIND FAMILIES IN AZAD JAMMU & KASHMIR

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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** To investigate the determinants of depression, anxiety and unmanageable stress among left behind wives of overseas migrants in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJ&K).

**Study Design:** Cross sectional study.

**Place and Duration of Study:** International Islamic University Islamabad, 2015.

**Materials and Method:** The sample comprised of 200 left behind wives, selected from two districts of AJ&K through purposive sampling technique. Depression anxiety stress scale along with a demographic sheet was used for the data collection. A t-test and one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were computed.

**Results:** Findings indicated significantly high depression ( $M=18.77, p<0.01$ ) stress ( $M=21.5, p<0.001$ ) among left behind wives belonging to joint family system as compared to left behind wives of nuclear families. Present study has found significant differences on depression ( $M=18.34, p<0.01$ ) anxiety ( $M=15.12, p<0.01$ ) and stress ( $M=21.78, p<0.01$ ) among left behind wives having physical illness. Significantly high depression ( $M=16.64, p<0.05$ ) and stress ( $M=19.94, p<0.01$ ) were measured among non-working left behind wives as compared to working left behind wives. Findings of the present study showed significant difference on depression  $F(7, 192) = 2.592, p<0.05$  and stress  $F(7, 192) = 2.117, p<0.05$  among left behind wives because of the duration of their husbands' migration.

**Conclusion:** Study found more prevalence of depression and stress as compared to anxiety among left behind wives.

**Keywords:** Anxiety, Depression, Left behind wives, Stress.

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### INTRODUCTION

Globalization brings opportunities for individuals to move from one place of world to another. Consequently, this process of rapid shift results in migration of many individuals and communities throughout the world for exploring better prospects in the context of economic endeavors. Migration is a process where people move from one place to another with the intention of staying there permanently or for relatively shorter period of time<sup>1</sup>.

Overseas migrants in general and particularly from Pakistan leave their countries mainly for the expectations of a higher income abroad, which urge them to make such decisions to emigrate<sup>2</sup>. International migration from

Pakistan is a common phenomenon, however, this phenomena is distinctive from other countries in the context of emigrants workers leave their families behind and support them financially back home<sup>3</sup>. Migration of only husbands for earning money, have a considerable effect on their left behind families including their wives personal, psychological, managerial, social and children discipline related problems. Scientific literature has identified the consequences of family members particularly husbands emigration in the context of psychological turmoil including depression, stress, anxiety, emotional problems, loneliness and feelings of insecurity among their spouses<sup>4</sup>. A longitudinal survey was conducted in Indonesia between 1993-2007 regarding psychosocial consequences of out migration, which indicated that spouses left behind are more vulnerable to stress related illnesses such as hypertension and depression<sup>5</sup>.

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A great body of research has focused on life events as a causal factor in depression. The role of stressful life events in triggering episodes of depression has been studied extensively<sup>6</sup>. Psychological problems are precipitated by stressful life events such as separation, loneliness, strange environment, displacement, insecurity and the loss of a loved one<sup>7</sup>. In case of overseas migration wives of overseas migrants feel temporary loss because of separation, loneliness, insecurity, feelings of anxiety because of communication gap with their husbands, problems in children upbringing and work overload, which make them vulnerable to develop symptoms of depression, anxiety and stress<sup>8,9</sup> and co-morbid symptoms of other psychiatric symptoms<sup>10</sup>.

Studies conducted on Filipino wives<sup>11</sup> and gulf wives in India<sup>12</sup> found that among left behind wives besides their increased responsibilities, absence of their husbands produce certain amount of emotional stress and recurring thoughts about the safety of migrant husband, which also causes more mental stress of left behind wives.

In Pakistan some positive aspects of economic migration in terms of remittances were reported among left behind families, including improvement in their economic condition, social changes, family relationships, educational achievements, savings and investment patterns. However, adverse negative impacts of migration were also highlighted such as lack of parental control in children, substance abuse, feelings of insecurity by migrant's female spouse and problems in arrangement of marriages of their sons and daughters<sup>4</sup>.

Another study conducted in rural area of Pakistan (Faisalabad) found that by assuming new responsibilities and duties in the absence of their husbands, left behind wives felt loneliness and burdened particularly concerning the male children. As a result they felt psychological strains in their husbands' absence<sup>13</sup>.

Since history people of developing countries become migrants, so large number of studies addressed remittances as a cause of migration but recently research has also started new trend of focusing on the impacts of migration on left behind families staying at their places<sup>14</sup>. In Pakistan effect of economic migration on left behind family has mainly studied in economic perspectives, and little attention has been paid to investigate the psychological sufferings of left behind family members. Some studies in Pakistan have reported about psychological problems faced by left behind family members, but these problems were not explored in depth neither they used any standardized psychological instrument with established psychometric properties for the measurement of psychological problems of left behind family members<sup>4,13,15,16</sup>. Present study was conducted in two districts (Poonch and Sudhanotti) of the State of Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJ&K) where large number of male members work abroad, and their left behind families (wives) have been suffering at psychological level because of the absence of their husbands (family heads). Present study is an attempt to investigate the psychological problems of left behind wives as consequence of the overseas migration of their husbands by using a standardized instrument. It was hypothesized that there is difference on depression anxiety and stress between left behind wives belonging to nuclear and joint family system. Left behind wives having any physical illness or not having, also showed difference in their scores on depression anxiety and stress. Present study also hypothesized that depression anxiety and stress are higher among non-working as compared to working left behind wives of overseas migrants. Present study also measured the difference on depression anxiety and stress among left behind wives having different duration of their husbands migration years.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Cross sectional study design was followed for the present research. Study was conducted in International Islamic University Islamabad

during August 2015. Study was conducted after getting approval from ethical review board of International Islamic University, Islamabad. Sample comprised of 200 left behind wives of overseas migrants of Sudhanotti and Poonch district of AJ&K, and was selected by using non probability purposive sampling technique. Age range of left behind wives of overseas migrants was from 20-59 years. Participants were literate enough and were able to read scale items. Left behind wives with their husbands' duration of

demographic sheet and Urdu translated depression anxiety stress scale DASS<sup>17</sup>. There was no time limit for completing the scale items. DASS is a four point likert scale comprised of 42 items total, 14 items (3,5,10,13,16,17,21,24, 26,31,34,37,38,42) measuring depression, 14 items (2,4,7,9,15,19,20,23,25,28,30,36,40,41) measuring anxiety and 14 items (1,6,8,11,12,14,18,22,27,29, 32,33,35,39) measuring stress<sup>18</sup>. Data of the present study was analysed by using SPSS version 21. t test and Anova test were computed

**Table-I: Family system differences among study variables (n=200).**

Variables	Nuclear (n=134)		Joint (n=66)		t(198)	p-value	95% CI		Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL	
Depression	14.55	7.31	18.77	9.01	3.03**	.003	-5.96	-1.26	-0.51
Anxiety	12.44	6.07	13.73	6.17	1.40	.163	-3.09	.52	-0.21
Stress	17.39	7.22	21.5	6.87	3.88***	.000	-6.26	-2.04	-0.58

\*\*p<0.01 \*\*\*p<0.001

**Table-II: Differences on depression anxiety stress with respect to physical illness of left behind wives of overseas migrants (n=200).**

Variables	No Illness (n=141)		Physical Illness (n=59)		t(198)	p-value	95% CI		Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL	
Depression	14.66	7.26	18.34	9.29	2.99**	.003	-6.10	-1.2	-0.44
Anxiety	11.92	5.42	15.12	7.09	3.46**	.001	-5.02	-1.37	-0.50
Stress	17.50	6.33	21.78	8.70	3.88***	.000	-6.45	-2.10	-0.56

\*\*p<0.01\*\*\*p<0.001

**Table-III: Differences on depression anxiety stress with respect to working & non working left behind wives of overseas migrants (n=200).**

Variables	Non Working (n=139)		Working (n=61)		t(198)	p-value	95% CI		Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL	
Depression	16.64	8.66	13.70	6.12	2.39*	.018	.51	5.35	0.39
Anxiety	13.25	6.56	11.98	4.92	1.35	.178	-.58	3.11	0.21
Stress	19.94	7.75	16.08	5.53	3.50**	.001	1.68	6.02	0.57

\*p<0.05 \*\*p<0.01

migration less than a year were not included in the sample. For the present study left behind wives were contacted individually at their homes by the researcher. Informed consent of the participants was taken before starting data collection and they were assured about the confidentiality of their responses towards each question. After taking their consent participants were informed briefly about research objectives and its utility. Data was collected with the help of

to measure differences of left behind wives on depression anxiety stress scale with respect to their family system (nuclear & joint), having any physical illness, working & non working and having different duration of their husbands migration.

**RESULTS**

Total sample of 200 left behind wives was used in the present study. Left behind wives

belonging to nuclear family system (f=134, 67.0%) were large in number as compared to joint family system (f=66, 33.0%). Greater number of left behind wives were house wives (f=139, 69.5%) as compared to belonging to teaching and other

a reliable measure of psychological problems of left behind wives of overseas migrants.

Table-I shows Mean, Standard deviation and t values for depression anxiety and stress among left behind wives belonging to nuclear and joint

**Table-IV: Mean Standard deviation and f-values for depression anxiety and stress among left behind wives because of their husbands years of migration (n=200).**

Variables	Years of husband migration	n	M	SD	F	p-value
Depression	3 years	56	16.41	7.69	2.59	.01
	6 years	24	12.71	6.62		
	9 years	22	16.05	7.61		
	12 years	24	16.54	8.27		
	15 years	25	18.48	10.34		
	18 years	10	13.20	7.51		
	21 years	20	11.15	4.98		
	24 years and above	19	18.84	8.32		
Anxiety	3 years	56	13.46	6.37	1.90	.07
	6 years	24	12.21	5.80		
	9 years	22	11.86	5.03		
	12 years	24	11.71	5.06		
	15 years	25	13.20	4.61		
	18 years	10	12.60	9.38		
	21 years	20	10.50	4.54		
	24 years and above	19	16.74	8.00		
Stress	3 years	56	19.50	7.87	2.12	.04
	6 years	24	16.13	5.65		
	9 years	22	19.50	8.29		
	12 years	24	19.13	5.15		
	15 years	25	20.40	6.98		
	18 years	10	16.30	8.62		
	21 years	20	15.05	4.67		
	24 years and above	19	21.63	9.25		

profession (f=61, 30.5%). Left behind wives not having any physical illness (f=141, 70.5%) were more as compared to left behind wives suffering from physical illness (f=59, 29.5%). Greater number of left behind wives' husband migrated since 3 years (f=56, 28.0%) as compared to 15 years (f=25, 12.5%), 6&12 years (f=24, 12.0%), 9 years (f=22, 11.0%), 21 years (f=20, 10.0%), 24 years and more (f=19, 9.5%) and 18 years (f=10, 5.0%). Alpha reliabilities of Sub scales of Depression (α=.86) Anxiety (α=.73) Stress (α=.85) are found to be quiet satisfactory, indicating scale

family system. Results indicate significant mean differences on depression t (198)=3.03, p<0.01 and stress t (198)=3.88, p<0.001. While for anxiety findings show non significant difference t(198)=1.40, p=0.163 however it has been indicated that left behind wives belonging to joint family system have more anxiety (M=13.73, SD=6.17 ) as compared to left behind wives belonging to nuclear family system (M=12.44, SD=6.07).

Table-II shows mean, standard deviation and t-values for depression anxiety and stress among

left behind wives having any physical illness or not. Results indicate significant mean differences on depression  $t(198)=2.99, p<0.01$ , anxiety  $t(198)=3.46, p<0.01$  and stress  $t(198)=3.88, p<0.001$ .

Table-III shows mean, standard deviation and  $t$  values for depression anxiety and stress among working and non-working left behind wives of overseas migrants. Results indicate significant mean differences between non-working left behind wives (housewives) and working (teaching, nursing and other professions) left behind wives on depression  $t(198)=2.39, p=0.018$  and stress  $t(198)=3.50, p<0.01$ . While for anxiety, table findings show non significant difference  $t(198)=1.35, p=1.78$ , however it has been indicated that left behind wives belonging to non-working status (housewives) have more anxiety ( $M=13.25, SD=6.56$ ) as compared to working left behind wives ( $M=11.98, SD=4.92$ ).

Table-IV shows the mean, standard deviation and  $F$  values for depression, anxiety and stress. Table further describes that different duration of husbands migration years have significant difference on the scores of depression  $F(7,192) = 2.59, p<0.05$  and on Stress scores  $F(7,192) = 2.12, p<0.05$  among left behind wives while for anxiety non significant difference has been noted scores  $F(7,192)=1.90, p=0.07$ . Result indicates that level of depression and stress varies along with duration of years of husbands' migration. The post hoc analysis also showed  $p\text{-value}>0.05$ .

## DISCUSSION

Results of the study showed high prevalence of depression and stress among left behind wives belonging to joint family system as compared to nuclear family system, while for anxiety present study showed non significant differences. One reason for these findings can be that, in nuclear families absence of their husbands make wives dominating and they feel free to make important decision of their home<sup>8,19</sup>. But in joint family they have to take care of each and every person in the family as they cannot make decisions alone. It has

also been studied that interpersonal problems within the family have been particularly important in triggering depression<sup>20</sup>. A study conducted in Romania indicated that left behind family members suffer strongly on mental and psychological level. Stress and anxiety by having insecure feelings about their loved one as well as having adjustment problems with other family members give rise to a number of psychological disturbances<sup>21</sup>.

Present study also measured the difference on depression anxiety and stress among left behind wives having any physical illness or not and findings showed high rate of depression anxiety and stress among participants suffering from any physical illness. Findings of the present study are in line with some other earlier studies showing that left behind wives of overseas migrants have increased rate of physical and mental health problems including depression<sup>14</sup>.

Difference on depression anxiety and stress among working and non-working left behind wives of overseas migrants was also explored in the present study. Results of the study showed high depression and stress among non-working left behind wives as compared to working left behind wives, while for anxiety study showed the non-significant differences. These findings are in accordance with a study which found unemployment and loss of family income's strong associated with depression<sup>22</sup>. A study conducted in Gujrat Pakistan indicated that non working women have more chances of depression as compared to the working women<sup>23</sup>.

Present study found significant differences on the scores of depression and stress among left behind wives because of the difference in duration of migration of their husbands, while for anxiety non significant difference has been found. Number of researches indicates that episodes of major depressive disorder are precipitated by stressful life events<sup>24</sup>. As for left behind wives husband migration is a stressor so they frequently report their psychological problems in the form of depression and stress.

While collecting data for the main study it has been observed by the researcher that majority of left behind wives report about their problems in terms of sad, depressed mood and stress as compared to anxiety. This can be one of the reasons for having non significant differences on anxiety on multiple hypotheses, so future studies can address this issue and can be planned specifically for measuring anxiety among left behind wives of AJ&K.

## CONCLUSION

Study found more prevalence of depression and stress as compared to anxiety among left behind wives.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

This study has no conflict of interest to declare by any author.

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